

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06

SIL-01 NIC-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /166 W

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R 130020Z NOV 73

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1872

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

RUEHB

J/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 517

C O N F I D E N T I A L MELBOURNE 1166

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND TO BUILDING INDUSTRY DISPUTES

REF: SYDNEY 2557

1. AS REFTEL REPORTS, NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW) BUILDERS LABORERS' FEDERATION (BLF) HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN A SERIES OF "GREEN BAN" STRIKES AND IS THE OBJECT OF A MANAGEMENT LOCK-OUT THAT IS PROVIDING THE MAJOR ISSUE IN THE NSW STATE ELECTIONS. BLF IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A UNION UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL AND OF THAT PARTY'S ABILITY TO BEND INDUSTRIAL ACTION TACTICS TO SUIT ITS TRANSITORY POLITICAL NEEDS. UNFORTUNATELY FOR AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST UNITY, IT ALSO REFLECTS SCHISMS IN PARTY LINE.

2. SO-CALLED "GREEN BAN" IS TACTIC BROUGHT TO NEAR PERFECTION BY JACK MUNDEY, STATE LEADER OF THE BLF NSW BRANCH, WHO HAS JUST FINISHED TERM AS UNION'S STATE SECRETARY. ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED TO UNIFY CONSERVATIONISTS OF ALL STRIPES WITH UNIONISTS, ITS GREEN COLORATION HAS BEEN DILUTED TO SKY BLUE
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IN FIGHTS TO SAVE LIGHT AND AIR SPACE; TO CONCRETE GREY TO

PRESERVE HISTORIC BUILDINGS; AND, LATTERLY, TO OPPOSE JUST ABOUT ANY BUILDING THAT OFFENDS AGAINST MUNDEY'S FLEXIBLE DEFINITION OF "UNDESIRABLE". THIS TACTIC HAS SUCCEEDED IN CONFUSING THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT AND WILL HAVE SOME EFFECT THOUGH SMALL ON UPCOMING NSW ELECTIONS.

3. EVENTUALLY MUNDEY'S PROLIFERATING BANS CONVINCED INDUSTRY EMPLOYERS HE HAD GONE TOO FAR AND AN ACTION HAS BEEN STARTED TO DE-REGISTER THE FEDERATION IN NSW. THIS PROVIDED EXCUSE FOR NATIONAL BUILDERS LABORERS' UNION HEADQUARTERS TO INTERVENE. SO FAR WITH SMALL SUCCESS.

4. FEDERAL SECRETARY OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS FEDERATION (BCWF) IS NORMAN GALLAGHER WHO FOLLOWS PEKING LINE; BUT WHO IS CORDIALLY HATED BY MUNDEY. AT SEPTEMBER ACTU FEDERAL CONGRESS, GALLAGHER MADE DEAL WITH RIGHT-WING NSW ELEMENTS, AND SUCCEEDED IN GETTING HIMSELF ELECTED TO ACTU EXECUTIVE BOARD, REPLACING MOSCOW-ORIENTED PAT CLANCY, FEDERAL SECRETARY OF THE BUILDING WORKERS' UNION (BWU). PART OF DEAL ASSURED ELECTION ALSO OF RIGHT-WINGER RALPH MARSH, NSW TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL SECRETARY, AND LONG-TIME MUNDEY FOE. FIERY BUILDERS LABORERS' LEADER WAS REDUCED TO FOAMING FURY, DIRECTED CHIEFLY AT GALLAGHER.

5. SO FAR, THE MAOIST "COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST-LENINIST)" (CPA-ML) IS BACKING MUNDEY, A MEMBER OF RIVAL ORIGINAL "COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA", AGAINST GALLAGHER WHO IS A CPA-ML VICE-PRESIDENT. THE OTHER THREE COMMUNIST FACTIONS, THE ORIGINAL "COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA" (AARONS), THE "SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA" (CLANCY) AND THE TROTSKYISTS SEEMS TO BE SITTING THIS ONE OUT.

6. NSW LABOR COUNCIL'S PROBLEM (OF STATE VERSUS NATIONAL UNION AUTHORITY--PARA 3 REFTTEL) IS COMPOUNDED BY THE EFFECT OF MUNDEY'S STRIKES ON NSW ELECTION, AND POSSIBLE IMPACT ON FEDERAL POLITICS IF GALLAGHER SPREADS STRIKES NATION-WIDE. THIS PROBLEM MAY BE SOLVED AS BCWF HEADQUARTERS IS INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD IN RECENT BLF NSW ELECTION, WHICH, IF FOUND "TRUE", MIGHT BE USED TO DOWNGRADE MUNDEY AND HIS HAND-PICKED SUCCESSOR.

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